

Competency-based Education

Piedmont City School District – Defining Learning Objectives

How does your organization define competency-based education?

Students are given the ability to show mastery of standards and advance at their pace, with minimum pace established. Students also have the opportunity to work on an individualized learning plan that is used to help fill content area gaps in their education.



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http://digitalpromise.org/cbe_resource/piedmont-city-school-district-structuring-time-in-a-cbe-classroom/

Overview

Core classes have developed lessons, activities, and assessments for each Alabama College and Career Ready Standard. Teachers are given the freedom to determine what students must be able to successfully complete to show mastery of the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards, whether through tests, labs, projects, or student completion. Teachers are also allowed to break down the standards into sub-standard to allow students to show mastery on sub-standards that led to mastery of an entire College and Career Ready Standard.

Beliefs

As a school and system, we believe that students need to be given the opportunity to show mastery of standards. This mastery would be more beneficial to students than using an overall average grade to show understanding.

Rationale

This toolkit was developed through a partnership between



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We wanted students to be able to accelerate through their learning at their individual pace as opposed to everyone being on the same lesson at the same time. We do not want students to be held back if they can move on and we do not want them pushed forward if they do not truly understand the content.

Outcomes

We were pleased at the ease that most students took to mastery-based learning. Also, we were pleased that our ACT Aspire scores have shown so much growth over the last year in all areas. The percentage of students that moved to “ready/exceeds” from fifth to sixth grade had 19% growth in reading and 32% growth in math. The students from sixth to seventh grade had 7% growth in reading and 13% growth in math. The students from seventh to eighth grade had 25% growth in reading and 19% growth in math. These are the same students from the 2015 test to the 2016 test.

Surprises

It seemed harder for our higher performing students to get the hang of what we were doing because they were really good at “playing school” and were not used to being allowed to accelerate beyond the rest of the class.

Trade-offs

Teachers do not truly ever get down time since students are on so many different standards at any given time in their classrooms. They have to continue to plan small group activities for different standards as well as grading work on multiple standards each day in different digital programs as well as teacher made work. Teacher planning is mostly spent organizing data, planning class structure, and grouping students on a daily basis. Daily, teachers must analyze student work and data to help determine individual mastery of standards. Teachers’ time is also spent planning for class structure that still allows for daily student interaction through collaboration and group work for students that are working common standards. This allows for various group work to be occurring at the same time. This is necessary coursework for the mastery of standards.

Considerations

Schools need to make sure that there is plenty of information provided to stakeholders on a regular basis. We thought we had this covered but we still had many parents and students that did not truly understand what we were doing until we had more opportunities for them to learn. In the beginning, parents did not understand the idea of self-paced mastery learning. They also questioned the grading system we used for mastery learning. After the first quarter of school, we had a parent night to provide additional information to clarify our learning model. From this meeting, we modified our numerical grading system to the grading system that we currently use.

Artifacts

Within [this folder](#), we have uploaded a sample pacing guide showing what standards are covered each nine weeks to meet a minimum pace. There are also screenshots of how our Blackboard is set up. We do not set up lessons based on chapters or units. Instead, we have classes set up by conceptual categories, standards, and lessons for that standard as seen by the screenshots. Also included is a screenshot of a mastery connect tracker showing mastery of standards in a math class.

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